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H1N1 DEATH TOLL RISES

SASKATCHEWANIANS ARE BEING URGED TO GET VACCINATED AS THE NUMBER OF FLU FATALITIES REACHES SIX PAGE 3

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Sochi, here we come

From left, Patrick Marleau, Ryan Getzlaf and Chris Kunitz make up the trio of Saskatchewan NHLers who will represent Canada at the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia. Story, page 15.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: PAUL CORPUS/METRO

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Province sees three more deaths after H1N1 exposure

Cases nearly double in days. Saskatchewan deputy chief medical officer urging all residents to get the flu shot

SARAH TAGUIAM
sarah.taguiam@metronews.ca

Three more people — two of them elderly — have died after contracting the H1N1 flu strain in Saskatchewan.

The recent deaths bring the number of H1N1 fatalities in the province to six since last month, health officials said on Tuesday.

"H1N1 is circulating throughout the province ... and we know that all persons in Saskatchewan are at risk," Dr. Denise Werker, Saskatchewan deputy chief medical officer, told media in Regina.

"We anticipate that the season will continue until March."

Two children under the age of five, three senior citizens and one adult have died of what has sometimes been described as swine flu.

The number of laboratory-confirmed flu cases in general in the province has also increased from 161 to 336 in a matter of seven days — almost a 50 per cent increase, Werker said.

Regina, she added, has so far been the area of Saskatchewan hardest hit by flu cases this season.

"The Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region (RQHR) has seen more activity than other regions," Werker said.

Is flu the cause?

- Dr. Werker was unable to confirm that H1N1 was the cause of or a contributing factor in the deaths, because at least four of the patients had underlying medical conditions.

"But that doesn't mean that other regions will not see more activity as the season goes on."

RQHR spokesman Bill Carney confirmed Werker's assessment, but said numbers have been shifting.

A week ago, 60 per cent of Saskatchewan's confirmed influenza cases this season were in Regina, though that portion has since dropped to 35 per cent.

"I think the province is catching up to us," Carney said.

Werker is urging all Saskatchewan residents to get flu vaccinations.

She stressed that it's especially important for children under the age of five, pregnant women and adults with underlying medical conditions to get shots.

Vaccines are being administered at mass drop-in clinics across the province.

Werker pointed out that it takes about two weeks before the H1N1 vaccine takes effect in the body, to provide full immunization.

"Unfortunately," she said, "those persons who are getting vaccinated now and in the next couple of weeks are not in the best position."

Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health originally ordered 280,000 doses of the vaccine, but due to the high demand, the government has worked with other provinces and the federal government to acquire more.

"Seasonal vaccine production has finished globally, so there's a limited global supply," Werker said.

"We're working with other provinces and the federal government to acquire whatever we can."

Dr. Denise Werker, Saskatchewan deputy chief medical officer, said three more people in the province have died this flu season after contracting H1N1. SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO

773 tips in 2013

Regina Crime Stoppers turns 30

January has been proclaimed Crime Stoppers Month, as Regina Crime Stoppers celebrates a successful 2013.

Crime Stoppers received 773 tips last year, which assisted Regina police in making 18 arrests, according to the local division of the organization.

The arrests led to a seizure of $31,004 worth of drugs and a recovery of $12,718 in property.

Regina Crime Stoppers is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2014 and plans to expand its reach this year.

Crime Stoppers street signs will appear in high-traffic areas, as well as digital signs displaying Crime Stoppers information in various languages.

"We recognize there is tremendous power in the knowledge anyone may have about a crime, potential crime, wanted or missing person," says a release from the organization, which works with police.

"By anonymously sharing information on a possible crime, you can make our city an even better place to live in 2014."

SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO

The power of knowing

"We recognize there is tremendous power in the knowledge anyone may have about a crime..."

Crime Stoppers press release

4.1 per cent

U of R's student enrolment increasing

Enrolment at the University of Regina has increased by 4.1 per cent, with 500 more students registering at this time last year.

Graduate students have accounted for the biggest increase at 5.8 per cent, as 87 more registered compared to a year ago.

The number of undergraduate students rose by 3.8 per cent.

"This increase continues to illustrate that the University of Regina's programs are meeting the demands of students from across our province, throughout Canada and around the world," U of R president and vice-chancellor Vianne Timmons said on Tuesday in a prepared statement.

According to the U of R, its overall enrolment has been on an upward trend for the past five years. SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO

Todd Loik

No proof teen who committed suicide was bullied: RCMP

RCMP in Saskatchewan say they have found no evidence of harassment or criminal behaviour in the case of a 15-year-old boy who committed suicide last year.

Police said they reviewed more than 16,000 text messages, hundreds of images, Facebook messages and videos as part of the investigation into Todd Loik's death last September.

"We did not find any evidence that there were any threats made or any harassing behaviour being directed towards him," Sgt. Neil Tremblay said in an interview Tuesday.

"Also, we did numerous interviews of people — you know friends, family — through the schools to try to ascertain if there were other problems that were existing not online ... but we did not uncover any evidence that that was the case."

Mounties in North Battleford found the teen's body when they were called to a home early on Sept. 9.

Investigators determined during their initial investigation that his death was not suspicious or criminal in nature and that he didn't die from natural causes. But they began investigating allegations that Loik was a victim of bullying after getting more information from his mother on Sept. 26.

Kim Loik has said the bullying started several years ago in the schoolyard and, as her son got older, the insults came through his computer and phone.

Loik said she told her son to ignore the bullies and the constant barrage of insults. She said on the night of Sept. 8 he received another taunt, and the next morning she found her son dead in their home in North Battleford.

Tremblay says officers met with Loik's family to tell them about the investigation.

"It's a lot of information to take, as you can imagine. We were able to provide them with more detail than we're releasing to the media, obviously," said Tremblay.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Saskatchewan invests millions in First Nations, Métis education

Funding. Province hopes to close educational gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities with two innovative programs

JACOB MORGAN
Metro in Saskatoon

Maureen Taylor, superintendent of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, speaks with Aski, the turtle puppet from the Help Me Tell My Story program, during an announcement at the provincial government's Saskatoon cabinet office on Tuesday. JACOB MORGAN/METRO IN SASKATOON

Two initiatives for First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan are getting a financial boost from the provincial government.

Education Minister Don Morgan announced on Tuesday that a $3-million investment will be split evenly between the Help Me Tell My Story and Invitational Shared Services programs.

"Today's announcement highlights the importance of providing First Nations youth and Métis youth with education opportunities that support success, foster dignity and promote respect," Morgan said at the province's Saskatoon cabinet office.

He added that the graduation rate for the general population is about 70 per cent, while it's only 30 per cent for First Nations communities.

"By the year 2020," he said, "we would like to close that gap by at least half."

Maureen Taylor, superintendent of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, said the Help Me Tell My Story project fosters traditional language development in kindergarten and pre-kindergarten classes.

It includes involvement from parents and uses the help of a puppet named Aski to bring a more holistic approach to assessment, she said.

"We aim to create real and measurable change for children," said Taylor.

The funding will bring Help Me Tell My Story to 100 additional schools, around 70 of which are on reserves.

Dan Florizone, deputy minister of education, said the Invitational Shared Services program is a voluntary dialogue between educators.

He said different institutions can exchange information to "provide the same level of support on-reserve as our students in provincial schools are seeing."

The projects have come as a result of recommendations from the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People.

Gary Merasty, chairman of the task force, said he is realistic about the challenges ahead.

"I see (First Nations and Métis) students battling to stay in school every day," he said.

Brace for property-tax hike in 2014, mayor says

Regina residents can anticipate higher property-tax payments this year as city council prepares for budget deliberations later this month.

"I don't want to prejudge where the public and council is going to go, but I think it's safe to say we will likely see a (property-tax) increase," Mayor Michael Fougere told Metro on Tuesday, noting that the 2014 budget will be tabled in late January or early February for public review and should be approved later in February.

Fougere said the increase is necessary to keep pace with the rising costs of crucial municipal services, including repairs to streets.

If council does not raise the property tax, Coun. Wade Murray cautions that the city will have to cut its workload.

"If we have no mill-rate increase this year, we are actually able to do three per cent less work than we did the year before," he said.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF), however, claims the city is failing its residents by not seeking innovative ways to reduce the tax burden.

Colin Craig, Prairie director for the CTF, is urging council to tackle its costly pension plan for municipal employees and stage a referendum on the future of Regina's planned $278-million stadium.

"City employees … have a workplace pension plan that's far more expensive than (what) most people in the province (have)," Craig said.

"We said from the beginning that there should be a referendum before public funds go into (the stadium)."

Craig did, however, praise city hall for turning to a public-private partnership to pay for its planned wastewater treatment plant, projected to cost more than $220 million.

Because of the cost of the stadium, Fougere said Regina's property tax will jump by at least 0.45 per cent in 2014. He expects construction of the facility — the future home of the Saskatchewan Roughriders — to begin later this year.

MARCO VIGLIOTTI/METRO

Did you look up from a screen to read this?

Odds are you did, says a recent report. Half of Canadians say they spend close to 90% of their free time staring at a TV, tablet or smartphone

Canadian smartphone owners estimate they spend an average of nearly 90 per cent of their free time staring at one of the many screens they own, suggests a recently released report.

In an online poll of 28,000 Canadians — conducted in August by Ipsos on behalf of Google — half the respondents said they owned a smartphone. Of the smartphone users, 99 per cent also had a computer, 88 per cent had a TV, and 39 per cent had a tablet.

Smartphone owners admitted that they'd peg their screen time, including watching TV, using a computer, tablet or e-reader at about 86 per cent of their free time.

On the flip side, they figured they spent only 14 per cent of their leisure time daily listening to the radio, reading a printed page or enjoying other non-digital activities.

On average, smartphone owners said they spent about an hour and a half each day on their phone for personal use, with about 56 per cent happening outside the home.

Tablet owners said they were using their device for about an hour and 15 minutes daily, and three-quarters of that usage was at home.

Canadian smartphone owners spend an average of about 86 per cent of their free time looking at one of their many screens, a recently released poll suggests. ISTOCK

On the other hand...

Multi-tasking users were most likely to be on their phone while watching TV, followed by a pairing of using their phone and their computer together, and then using their tablet while channel surfing.

- Half of all TV viewers said they always have their phone, tablet or computer with them while looking for something to watch.

Computer users said they spent three hours and 10 minutes working or playing on a PC daily in their personal time, including an hour away from home.

When asked about using their devices simultaneously — for example, swiping and tapping on a phone or tablet while watching TV — 87 per cent said they do it at least once a week.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Vancouver. Protesters who disrupted Harper event won't be charged

Vancouver police say they won't be pursuing criminal charges against two climate-change protesters who came within touching distance of Prime Minister Stephen Harper on a stage at an event in Vancouver.

The protesters, who have publicly identified themselves as Sean Devlin and Shireen Soofi, walked on stage during a Vancouver Board of Trade question-and-answer event at a downtown hotel on Monday.

They were quickly removed and the event carried on, but the stunt raised questions about how two activists could get that close to Harper.

Sgt. Randy Fincham said Vancouver police consulted with the RCMP and decided not to recommend charges.

"After consultation with both (the RCMP and the Crown), it was determined that it wasn't in the public's best interest to pursue an investigation into criminal charges," Fincham said in an interview Tuesday.

On Monday, the activists each held up a sign attacking Harper's record on climate change. One sign said "Climate Justice Now," while the other featured a dark line crossed through the phrase "Conservatives Take Climate Change Seriously." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's security keeps watch during his arrival at the Shell Aerocentre during his Western tour in North Saanich, B.C., Monday. CHAD HIPOLITO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

U.S. woman who assisted with mom's suicide gets time served

Shirley Vann, left, her daughter Linda Jean McNall and their two dogs are shown in this family photo. A U.S. mental health advocate hopes an Arizona woman who admits she helped her mother commit suicide in Canada will continue to get care if she's deported. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HANDOUT

An Alberta judge has agreed that an American woman who pleaded guilty to helping her mother kill herself should not have to spend any more time behind bars.

Judge Charles Gardener sentenced Linda Jean McNall to eight months of time already served on the rare charge of aiding suicide in the death of her 79-year-old mother, Shirley Vann. That was the recommendation made by both the Crown and the defence.

Court heard details about a suicide pact McNall made with Vann. Both had health problems and had cared for one another for decades.

Last spring, after Vann's health deteriorated, they sold their belongings, left behind mounting medical bills and drove from Sierra Vista, Ariz., to Canada's Rocky Mountains.

They pitched a tent near Hinton, 300 kilometres west of Edmonton, injected themselves and their two pet dogs with insulin, swallowed sleeping pills and opened a propane tank. Vann and the animals died, but McNall, 53, survived.

McNall, who had worked as a nurse, pleaded guilty to the crime last month. The sentence means McNall, who still suffers from depression and was being treated at Alberta Hospital, will be deported to Arizona.

McNall's lawyer, Laura Stevens, said her client will spend the night in jail in Edmonton and will be flown back to Phoenix on Wednesday. There, Stevens said, her client is scheduled to be evaluated by a case worker and a crisis management team.

Gardener noted the progress McNall had been making recently at Alberta Hospital after two more suicide attempts while there.

"I take some comfort that your condition is improving," he told McNall, who was seated in the prisoner's box. "I hope you will receive some ongoing treatment and comfort ... and that you eventually find worth and value in your life."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Alberta. Man likely to face attempted murder charge after shootout with RCMP

RCMP say a man who was wounded in a shootout with Mounties on a farm east of Edmonton will likely face attempted murder and firearms charges.

One officer had his arm grazed by a bullet and another was run over by a truck driven by the suspect, who had been hiding in a shed.

The officer who was run over suffered broken bones and internal injuries and was undergoing surgery at an Edmonton hospital Tuesday afternoon.

Police said a couple arrested on the farm with the alleged gunman were later released without being charged.

The alleged gunman was in hospital being treated for gunshot wounds.

The wounded suspect was arrested after a lengthy standoff.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mexico City

2 Canadian women arrested in alleged firebomb attack

Two Canadian women have been arrested in Mexico City in connection with a firebomb attack on a government transportation department office and a car dealership. A Mexican man was also detained.

Prosecutors say the three face possible charges of causing damages to the office and the nearby car dealership.

The motive in the attack was not immediately clear.

Some Mexico City banks have been hit in recent years by small incendiary devices.

Those attacks have been attributed to small groups of leftists or animal rights activists. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Snowed in

Stranded trains arrive in Chicago

Hundreds of Amtrak passengers who spent the night aboard three trains stranded in snow in northern Illinois finally arrived in Chicago, rail line officials said Tuesday morning.

About 300 passengers on two trains that were stuck near Mendota, about 130 kilometres from Chicago, boarded buses in Princeton for the final leg of their trip, said Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari. They began arriving in downtown Chicago around 7 a.m. Tuesday and more were expected to arrive throughout the morning.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Icy seas

Chinese ship breaks free

A Chinese icebreaker that became trapped last week after coming to the rescue of a Russian research ship stuck in heavy sea ice in Antarctica broke free on Tuesday, state media reported. The Xue Long, or Snow Dragon, reported becoming trapped on Friday, a day after its helicopter rescued 52 scientists, journalists and tourists on board the Russian Akademik Shokalskiy, which got into trouble on Christmas Eve. They were then transferred to an Australian icebreaker to take them home. It escaped after making a 100-degree turn and pushing away the ice, thereby splitting it and opening up a channel of water. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Report

Disasters killed more people last year: Insurer

The German insurance company Munich Re says some 20,000 people died in natural disasters last year, about twice as many as in 2012.

Most of the deaths resulted from Typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines, Vietnam and China in November with a loss of almost 6,100 lives. Also taking a deadly toll were floods in India, which killed about 5,500 people in June. Munich Re's annual disasters report released Tuesday found that the economic cost of natural catastrophes was lower last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Life-threatening polar freeze descends over parts of U.S.

Indiana. At least 15,000 people were without power early Tuesday, and officials warned some could be in the cold for days

Brutal cold settled over parts of the U.S., sending the mercury plummeting Tuesday from New York and Washington to Atlanta, Nashville and Birmingham, where many people have little experience dealing with freezing weather.

The morning weather map for the eastern half of the U.S. looked like an algebra worksheet: lots of small, negative numbers. In fact, the Midwest and the East were colder than much of Antarctica.

Georgia, where the temperature dropped into the single digits, was colder than many cities in Alaska. While Kodiak and Juneau registered 4 and Anchorage was at -2, Atlanta dipped to -14 degrees early in the morning, or nearly 17 degrees below the average low this time of year.

"This is severely cold for these parts," said Brian Lynn, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Peachtree City, Ga.

Farther south in Pensacola, Fla., a Gulf Coast city better known for its white sand beaches than frost, streets normally filled with joggers, bikers and people walking dogs were deserted early Tuesday as the morning remained in the negative teens. Downtown, Monica Anderson and Tommy Howard jumped up and down and blew on their hands while they waited for a bus, struggling to stay warm.

Anderson said she couldn't recall it ever being so cold.

"I'm not used to it. It is best just to stay inside until it gets better," said Anderson.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The cold weather makes vision challenging as Jobin Curoe's glasses fog up while walking in temperatures and wind chills reaching -40 to -50 C on the Lawrence University campus on Monday.

SHARON CEKADA/THE POST-CRESCENT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prison brrr-eak

Fugitive too cold to get far, gives up

Just how cold is it in the U.S.? Apparently cold enough for an escaped prisoner to turn himself in. Authorities say the inmate escaped from a minimum security facility in Kentucky on Sunday. As temperatures dropped far below freezing Monday, they say he walked into a motel and asked the clerk to call police. Lexington police spokeswoman Sherelle Roberts says 42-year-old Robert Vick told the clerk he wanted to turn himself in and escape the arctic air. Roberts says Vick was checked out by paramedics and returned to Blackburn Correctional Complex.

Extreme cold causes delays at Toronto airport

Frustrated passengers line up during flight delays and cancellations due to extreme cold weather and wind chill at Pearson International Airport in Toronto on Tuesday. AARON VINCENT ELKAIM/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Extreme cold in the Toronto area, where temperatures plunged to about -40 C overnight with the wind chill, caused a rash of delays and flight cancellations Tuesday at Pearson International Airport.

The airport put a so-called ground freeze on all North American arrivals through the morning, but it was lifted at 10 a.m. More than 600 flights were cancelled throughout the day and many more were delayed.

The freeze was put in place because of the extreme cold's effects on equipment and efforts to minimize time outdoors for employees, said Greater Toronto Airports Authority spokeswoman Shereen Daghstani.

"It was the extreme weather conditions that impacted safe operations and employee safety," she said. "When it comes to refuelling or removing the bags, those need to be done by employees."

The problems were reportedly compounded by a backlog of planes waiting for gates to open to off-load passengers, travellers waiting hours to collect their luggage and long lineups snaking through Pearson's terminals.

Robert Palmer, spokesman for WestJet, said the company's planes couldn't take off Monday night, creating a bottleneck at the gates.

"As soon as a gate became available, we would push a plane to that gate, we would let the people off. We did not take their baggage off because that would've taken extra time and meanwhile there was a lineup of people in planes waiting to get off the plane," he said.

Connie Smith said she'd dealt with several weather-related delays and missed connections on her journey from Edmonton back to her home in Newfoundland. She and her husband were stranded overnight in Toronto. "This is horrible, just the waiting and the lineups. It should be more organized," she said as her husband stood in line at a service counter.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Goose gets pecked back over trademark lawsuit

Statement of defence.
Feathers are flying as companies hiss at each other over allegations of selling knock-off parkas

Canada Goose parkas are known for a circular logo on its sleeve, fur hood and hefty price tag. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Goose is trying to "bully" Sears Canada Inc. and other retailers through litigation, Sears is alleging in court documents as it hits back at a trademark infringement lawsuit.

The parka maker's real motive is to curtail the sales of lower-priced winter jackets so Canada Goose can keep selling its products "at a huge mark up," Sears alleges.

Canada Goose alleges in a lawsuit filed late last year that Sears is selling knock-offs of its highly distinctive coats.

The department store has now filed its statement of defence in Federal Court and is taking direct aim not just at this particular lawsuit, but what the retailer calls Canada Goose's "campaign of intimidation."

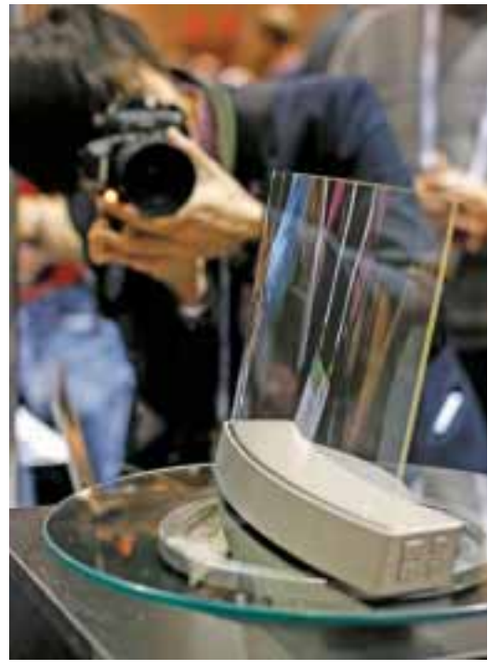
Canada Goose is trying to claim the exclusive right to sell any winter coat with a fur collar "of any sort" or with a circular logo on its sleeve, Sears alleges in its statement of defence.

Neither Sears' nor Canada Goose's allegations have been proven in court.

Canada Goose alleges that Sears is intentionally trying to mislead consumers into believing they're buying a "lower-end" Canada Goose jacket, the parka maker alleges in its lawsuit.

In its statement of defence, Sears says no consumer could confuse a Canada Goose jacket with Sears' Alpinetek coats. Sears has held a trademark for the Alpinetek logo since 1998, Sears wrote in its defence.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Crystal (glass) clear sound

Media photograph a glass speaker during the International Consumer Electronics Show, Sunday in Las Vegas. The speaker, by ClearView Audio, uses a single piece of curved millimetre-thick acrylic glass that sits on a dock which vibrates it in a finely tuned way so that it can play music. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Apptacular sales

Apple's app store tops $10B in 2013

The Angry Birds Star Wars app
SCREENGRAB

Apple says people spent more than $10 billion US in its app store last year, on apps such as Minecraft, Angry Birds Star Wars and Sleep Cycle alarm clock. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR
92.83¢ (-1.05¢)

TSX
13,596.93 (+101.39)

OIL
$93.67 US (+$0.24)

GOLD
$1,229.60 US (-$8.40)

Natural gas: $4.33 US (+$0.03)
Dow Jones: 16,530.94 (+105.84)

BlackBerry division aims to purrfect engine roar

For car lovers, there is just something about a revving engine that gets the blood moving faster.

Now automakers can capitalize on that feeling by teaming with a division of BlackBerry that is developing a way to replicate the sound of yesteryear's driving experience, even as cars become quieter and more fuel efficient.

QNX Software Systems — acquired by BlackBerry nearly four years ago — debuted a couple of concept cars on Tuesday at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

One is a modified Kia Soul hatchback that showcases a new technology called "engine sound enhancement." In its most basic form, it's a soundtrack that simulates the engine both inside the car and for people on the outside through speakers.

The interior view of a QNX concept car. THE CANADIAN PRESS

For automakers, it's crucial to get a vehicle's sound right, Kuhn said. The challenge is that every automaker wants a different sound, and the purr — or roar — of an engine can be as much an act of branding as it's an exercise in authenticity. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Start your engines!

"They wanted their car to sound like the cross between a certain brand of bass guitar and a snow leopard."

QNX sales and marketing vice-president Derek Kuhn, who said in a phone interview that one manufacturer was very particular when it asked musicians to enter a recording studio.

What was that?

Vehicles are lighter these days thanks to removing insulation and other parts that have grown to be unnecessary. A side effect is "strange noises" not heard before.

- If a car doesn't make the right noises, then often drivers will think something is wrong with it, said QNX sales and marketing vice-president Derek Kuhn.

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

JUST SAYIN'

Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

You have to feel sorry for Michael Bay.

Not because he's the director of epic Hollywood stinkers such as the Transformers movies and classic clunkers such as Pearl Harbour and Bad Boys II.

No, we have to send Michael a hug because he has suffered through the worst experience ever. There he was at the giant Consumer Electronics Show in Vegas on Monday, presenting on behalf of the 105-inch, curved-screen TV from Samsung, when he lost his place on the teleprompter and couldn't find it again.

After stammering and shuffling for the world's longest minute, he walked off the stage, leaving the Samsung guy holding the bag.

An ignominious retreat for the whiz kid who learned at the knees of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg to become one of the richest Masters of Tinsel Town, worth more than $400 million, according to Celebrity Net Worth.

The other reason we should feel sorry for Michael Bay is that nobody else is. Going mute at the world's foremost consumer electronics show is bad enough, but the peanut gallery is howling with delight.

Someone said he only did what so many before him have wanted to do: walk out of a Michael Bay production. Someone else observed that it was the first time he seemed uncomfortable without a script.

Whoa. Tough crowd.

And that's going to make it tougher for the 75 per cent of us who fear public speaking more than death itself. Yes, that's true. Glossophobia, as the fear of public speaking is called, is the No. 1 phobia, beating out the fear of death, and No. 3, fear of spiders. Jerry Seinfeld once observed that at a funeral, most of us would rather be in the casket instead of giving the eulogy.

Even if it's just standing in front of the class to spell glossophobia, most of us would rather die. My first real bout with stage fright happened in Grade 8, when I was required to stand in front of a packed school gym and play Moon River on the trombone. Somehow I got through the whole thing even though the sheet music kept slipping off the stand. But I kept thinking: there are two people in the audience who actually want to hear this, and I'm only sure about one of them (my mother).

No word on whether Michael Bay's mother was in the audience at CES, but it's a good idea for the jackals to remember that he has one, and she must be suffering agonies for her boy. For the sake of his mother, get off his case.

And if that doesn't move you to sympathy, you can at least learn from this ghastly experience. The next time you have to stand in front of an audience, before you go on, remember what happened to Michael Bay.

If that doesn't cause you to break into a flop sweat, nothing will.

ZOOM

Poached in their safe haven

COURTESY TIM WATTERS/SEA SHEPHERD AUSTRALIA

Protected whales seen captured

Activists have released rare photographs of protected whales killed by a Japanese fleet inside an internationally recognized ocean sanctuary.

Anti-whaling campaign group Sea Shepherd captured aerial footage of three minke whales' bloodied carcasses lying on the deck of Japanese vessel Nisshin Maru. METRO

Japan has loophole in moratorium

The images, purportedly taken inside the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary in Antarctica's Ross Dependency, have drawn international criticism from activists and politicians. Commercially hunting whales is banned in the region, but Japanese fleets allegedly capture the animals under a "scientific research" loophole in the moratorium on whaling. METRO

The image released by Sea Shepherd shows a bloodied deck of the Japanese whaling vessel Nisshin Maru. CONTRIBUTED

Surveillance

- The chairman of Sea Shepherd Australia says there is no oversight from the federal government.
- Last month, Australia's environment minister said there would be a plane sent to monitor the operation. Prior to the election, he said there would be a ship.

Clickbait

IRENE KUAN
Metro Online

Tech giants at the 2014 Consumer's Electronics Show in Las Vegas showed off their latest innovations in high-tech appliances from wireless, app-based plant monitors to a robot vacuum. Here are some highlights of home gadgets meant to make your life easier. CONTRIBUTED

Parrot Flower Power wireless plant monitor:

Ever wonder if your plant is parched or when its light intensity or temperature isn't quite right? With the Parrot Flower device, you can monitor and analyze the growth conditions of your flowery friends via a Bluetooth-equipped sensor that sends information to your smartphone or tablet using an app.

Smart Hom-Bot vacuum system:

This high-tech vacuum system is meant to make your life more convenient with the ability to map out your home to ensure a more effective cleaning path. The duel lenses on the appliance can snap images of your home and can remember the positioning of objects to sense when an area is already clean. It can also help clean air in the home via a HEPA filter, according to LG.

Panasonic's nanoe wet dry hair dryer:

A hair dryer may not seem all that impressive next to the many high-tech devices and gadgets at CES, but what makes Panasonic's nanoe hair dryer stand out is that it has the ability to add moisture to hair while drying it. According to Panasonic, the dryer breaks blown ions down before infusing them with moisture so imagine drying your tresses without having to worry about drying them out.

Twitter

@metropicks asked: Team Canada announced its roster for Sochi Olympics. Who would you have liked to see make the cut?

@KurtPenner: I would have picked Marty St Louis! #heart #consistency #goals #speedy #jiltedlasttime

@BergysAWarrior: #Looch deserved to be on #TeamCanada who wouldn't want a guy that can change a game with either a huge hit or by scoring a highlight goal :(

@alexisannna: I'm so sad about #Seabs and #Crow not making team canada but on the bright side #Sharp, #Toews and #Keith made it. #Sochi2014 #TeamCanada

@kfox9611: #TeamCanada should've brought Joe Thornton.. Imagine he scored 4 goals in the Olympics... #JumboJoe

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Send us your comments: reginaletters@metronews.ca

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Grammys

Daft Punk GETTY IMAGES FILE

Daft Punk to perform with Stevie Wonder

For a group that had one of the top albums of the past year, Daft Punk has been keeping a low profile — even lower than the duo's disguise-happy public persona would suggest.

Since releasing their hit Random Access Memories in May, the helmeted ones haven't even performed live in front of an audience.

But when you're nominated for five Grammys, that's kind of a command performance, especially when one of those nominations is for Album of the Year.

In the grand tradition of unlikely Grammy pairings that actually make a lot of musical sense, Daft Punk will be performing with Motown legend Stevie Wonder, the show's executive producer Ken Ehrlich told Rolling Stone.

Rolling Stone also reported that Pharrell Williams and Nile Rodgers will perform with Daft Punk, so you can expect a rendition of their mega-hit, Get Lucky. METRO

Pack A.D. to engage new fans with Do Not Engage

Shift in sound.
Garage-rock duo push for a bigger audience with latest album

Vancouver garage-rock duo the Pack A.D., from left, Maya Miller and Becky Black. CONTRIBUTED/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Vancouver garage-rock duo the Pack A.D. finally cleaved their way onto Canadian airwaves with 2011's Unpersons, a record that strayed far from the skeletal hard blues that marked their early work.

With Do Not Engage — out Jan. 28 — the band is pushing its newfound tunefulness even further, and the duo is blunt when asked to describe the shift in sound.

"Now our songs have things like choruses," said drummer Maya Miller during a recent chat in Toronto. "They never used to. Truthfully, they do have more melodies now."

Shedding their nascent primal-blues leanings almost completely, the Pack A.D. here channel the melodic fuzz of '90s post-grunge and lo-fi for a concise set of 11 songs that recall a range of influences including the Breeders, the Grifters and Superchunk.

There's still variety within that framework. "There's no real consistency but I kind of like that," singer Becky Black muses, but the common thread is a new accessibility.

And that pop craft arrived at a fortuitous time for the band, seemingly perched on the cusp of a breakthrough.

Since Unpersons came out, they became Juno Award nominees for breakthrough group (natch), signed with Nettwerk Records — such a sufficiently large label that Black marvels "there's a lot more people to remember" — and whisked their undomesticated live show across some larger stages, including a gig last month opening for the Arctic Monkeys.

Miller and Black acknowledge that a desire to capitalize on such opportunities did influence their songwriting.

"I think it obviously played a part in coming up with this album," Miller said.

"I also think people now can dance to our new album," she added. "I think it's been harder to dance to our music in the past. We used to have less opportunity for that. It was very odd music. It didn't really go anywhere. So maybe it's going somewhere."

If it sounds as though the pair is unhappy with their earliest work — 2008's Tintype and Funeral Mixtape — well, that's pretty accurate.

Those elemental recordings helped the duo gather a following, but they're not representative of where the group is at now.

"For me, I tried to think we didn't do those first two albums," Miller said. "Not in a really bad way, but it just feels like I don't even understand what we were doing then."

"I guess you have to look at it positively though," Black interjects. "The only reason the albums are better now is because they were bad in the beginning."

And that dissatisfaction pushed them to where they are now. THE CANADIAN PRESS

On the band's past albums

"There's nowhere to move with happiness. I think it's a terrible place to be. It's complacency. You do not grow from being happy."

Pack A.D. drummer Maya Miller

JDC West

Presented by: CPA CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

We

From January 17-19, the University of Regina's Paul J. Hill School of Business is hosting JDC West, the largest business case competition in Western Canada. The three-day event brings together more than 600 of Western Canada's brightest students from 12 business schools to compete in four highly contested areas: academics, debate, athletics, and the anything-goes social competition.

"What makes JDC West so unique is the spirit of the competition. JDC West would not be the same without it and we strive to see that spirit shines through in every aspect of the competition."
— Victoria Johnson, Co-Chair, Internal

"The amazing support we have received from the Paul J. Hill School of Business, University of Regina, municipal and provincial stakeholders has been instrumental in our success."
— Emily McNair, Co-Chair, External

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This year's theme, Beyond Profits, reflects the new way of doing business. The case competition focuses on three areas: economic sustainability, environmental impact and ethical decision making.

"Winning JDC West not only boosts student morale, but it increases faculty support, a critical element to success. It adds prestige to the business school and credibility to the competition, which drives team recruitment efforts."
— Léa Beaulieu Prpik, Vice-President, Academics

"JDC West is about building your network and being a good sport. These tools are huge in the business world. Trying your best, making friends and building networks just might lead you to your next big break."
— Jeanna Kozan, Vice-President, Debate

visit our website at: JDCwest.com

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Evan Peters and Emma Roberts ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

American Horror Story co-stars to wed — despite domestic abuse arrest

Evan Peters reportedly proposed to his American Horror Story co-star and girlfriend, Emma Roberts, over the holidays in New York before heading off to London for New Year's, according to People magazine.

The couple returned to the U.S. this week, with Roberts sporting a diamond on her ring finger.

Roberts, who has been dating Peters since 2012, was arrested on domestic violence charges last year after an incident that left Peters bloodied, though she was released a few hours later after he refused to press charges.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Twilight's Lutz on those Miley rumours

MEREDITH ENGEL
Metro World News

Ever since being spotted together at Beacher's Madhouse MGM around New Year's, The Legend of Hercules star Kellan Lutz has been linked with the world's most famous twerk monster, Miley Cyrus. But is there any truth to that rumour? We spoke to Lutz, who set the record straight.

"I adore the girl, and people assume stuff just because you're photographed at a party with multitudes of celebrities and public figures," he says.

"But the gossip and all these rumours that insiders say, they're funny because I don't look at these tabloids. ... I'm like, 'Where do people come up with this?' It's like people can just say 'insiders said' and then they can cover their butts that way. But no, she's an awesome girl and a really good friend."

So, folks, time to put away those fantasies of a tongue-wagging vampire baby.

Bell takes a progressive approach to parenting

Kristen Bell is keeping a pretty progressive outlook when it comes to parenting 10-month-old daughter Lincoln, especially when it comes to sex.

"People ask, 'Oh, well you've done some sexy material. Do you want her to see that?' And I'm like, 'My guess is if she's anything like the other five billion people on the planet, she's going to grow up and enjoy sex, so I'm not going to be shocked by that,'" Bell tells Chelsea Lately.

"I just think you're setting yourself up for disaster if you try to keep them little. She's going to grow up. She has — newsflash — a vagina, and she's going to figure it out one day, and more power to her."

Twitter

@samantharonson
Tried to be a human being and went to sleep before midnight, now I'm wide awake. Is this what you guys do? Now what?

@DanaDelany
lost 150 followers with Twitter update. Weird. Anyone else?

@SteveMartinToGo
I'd like to apologize for calling Polar Vortex winter. It's actually more of a spring.

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Tulum's beach on the Riviera Maya in Mexico features not only beautiful sand but pure, aquamarine waters and the ruins of an ancient Mayan village. JIM BYERS/METRO

Tell the snow where to go

And say hello to sand. Thaw the winter chill with an overview of some great beaches

JIM BYERS
@jimbyerstravel
jimbyerstravel.com

What with ice storms and snow and cold snaps, we could all use a bit of sand and surf right about now. Here's a look at eight of my favourite beaches in North America and the Caribbean.

Trunk Bay, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands
Perhaps the prettiest beach I've ever seen, with incredible water and even an underwater snorkelling trail you can follow. There's hardly a building in sight, the water is calm and there are great views of the British Virgin Islands.

Napili Beach, Maui, Hawaii
A perfect crescent of soft sand on a beach where no building can go more than two stories high. Safe for kids at the north end and decent bodysurfing at the south end, plus awesome views of nearby Molokai.

Miami
Yeah, this is an obvious, easy one. But how can you resist the pretty people and great bars and the luscious Art Deco architecture? Try the SoHo Beach House for an artsy hotel stay or strut your stuff on Haulover Beach, one of the few legal nude beaches in the U.S.

Sugar Beach, St. Lucia
It's not big but it's flanked by glorious, jungle-clad, deep green outcroppings of rock called The Pitons. There's a great snorkelling reef that's a UNESCO heritage site.

Tulum, Mexico
If you get tired of checking out the pretty, young people cavorting in the aquamarine water, you can gaze at the lovely rock formations or soak in the view of Mayan ruins overlooking the sea.

Valley Church, Antigua
The soft, white sand goes on for a good long while and the beach is flanked by pretty green hills dotted with vacation homes. There's a nice beach bar called The Nest.

Capitola, Calif.
I once called this village the best California surf town The Beach Boys never sang about. There's a pier for viewing sea lions and surfers and rows of colourful homes on the sand.

Panama City Beach, Fla.
The weather's warmer further south, but the sand here is white as snow and soft as an angels' wings. Try Andy's Flour Power for a tremendous breakfast or head to the main pier, which extends hundreds of metres into the Gulf of Mexico and is directly across from a fun, outdoor shopping centre with rides and a kids' playground.

Hanalei Beach, Kauai, Hawaii
A gorgeous, long stretch on the north coast. It can be rainy here but the views of the nearby mountains are glorious. The beach was featured in the movie The Descendants with George Clooney.

Valley Church Beach on Antigua has lovely sand and smooth, clear waters. JIM BYERS/METRO

Trunk Bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands is one of the prettiest beaches around. ISTOCK

This recipe makes 12 to 14 scallops. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Luxury meets ease with Bacon-Wrapped Scallops

Bacon-wrapped scallops are one of the most luxurious appetizers you can serve, not to mention one of the easiest to prepare.

Because there are only two main ingredients in this dish, you need to make sure you use the best quality — the biggest, freshest sea scallops you can find, and the most flavourful bacon. After that, they are so easy to grill that you hardly need a recipe.

There are two types of scallops, but only one of them is appropriate for the grill.

Tiny bay scallops are so sweet, you can eat them raw or just lightly sautéed. But they also are more expensive and not suited for grilling. What you want are the larger, less expensive sea scallops.

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp whole-grain mustard
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 lb jumbo sea scallops
- 1/2 lb centre-cut bacon
- Salt and ground black pepper
- Round wooden toothpicks, soaked in water for 30 minutes

1. Heat oven to 400 F. Set a wire rack over rimmed baking sheet. Heat grill to med-high.

2. In a small bowl, mix together the mustard and maple syrup. Set aside.

3. Use paper towels to blot dry the scallops. Arrange them on a plate, then set aside.

4. Arrange the bacon in a single layer on the rack over the baking sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until just starting to cook. Do not fully cook the bacon. Remove the bacon from the oven. If too hot to handle, let cool for several minutes. Once the bacon can be handled, wrap one slice of bacon around each scallop. Secure in place by threading one of the toothpicks through the bacon and scallop.

5. Use a pastry brush to lightly brush the tops and bottoms of the scallops with bacon fat from the pan. Season with salt and pepper. Grill for 2 to 3 minutes per side. Serve with the sauce for dolloping a bit onto each. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/ ELIZABETH KARMEL, AUTHOR OF SOAKED, SLATHERED AND SEASONED.

Sussing out your sensational (and sizable) selection of job supporters

Reference check.
You can never have too many individuals singing your praise on the job hunt

MEGHAN GREAVES
Metro World News

During your studies and the early stages of your work life, you'll develop relationships with all sorts of different individuals and you never know how these relationships may help you down the road when starting your career search.

Your part-time employer, a mentor that you had while completing a campus or school project, a career counsellor, a professor or a peer with whom you worked on a big project are all examples of people who can become useful professional connections.

How to do it

Ask as you go
One of the easiest ways to build your references is to treat the connection process as an ongoing activity. This will help you avoid scrambling to remember all your important contacts when you need them.

Be sure to ask your potential references if they would be willing to give you a professional or personal reference letter, depending on the situation, once your work with them is complete.

If you aren't sure about the strength of your connection, stay in contact and work on building a relationship through email.

Don't be afraid to ask
Asking someone for a reference doesn't have to be a daunting task — you've likely already established a good relationship with them. Also, it isn't mandatory to ask for a reference face-to-face. Though this is the most formal way to ask for a reference, if the idea truly puts you out of your comfort zone or you can't meet with the person, over the phone or via email works well too.

Keep it brief
Asking for a reference shouldn't be a speech about your life and why you deserve a reference from the person. Explain why you'd like them to be a reference and ask if they're comfortable doing so.

You don't want to waste their time — let them guide the conversation.

Can't stop, won't stop

One of the easiest ways to build your references is to treat the connection process as an ongoing activity.

It's not just about who you know, it's about the people you know who think you've got plenty to offer. ISTOCK

Why it's important to start now

Gives you credibility
Having references (you should aim to have at least three when applying for a job) shows that you have been able to take on multiple tasks and successfully complete them. Volunteer experiences, work experiences, projects or participation in different societies are all good examples of tasks that require dedication and purpose. Potential employers want to know that they're investing in someone who won't get up and leave at a moment's notice. Having references to back you up only makes you more credible.

Supports your resumé
Anyone can make claims on a resumé. While you can't have a reference for every single item on your resumé, having a variety of references for different skills — organizational skills, leadership skills, marketing skills — makes every part of your resumé more substantial.

If you have different contacts to pull from, then you also have the ability to tailor your references to each job application. This can give you an edge and makes you more employable.

Demonstrating initiative

Employers have a large selection of applicants to choose from during the hiring process.

- When you're trying to get your foot in the door, a well-rounded selection of references may help you overcome a lack of specific experience or a less-developed skill set.

WHL

Pats make deal for Schacher under trade deadline

The Regina Pats have acquired defenceman Issaac Schacher from the Victoria Royals in a trade, in exchange for fifth-round picks in the 2015 and 2016 WHL Bantam drafts.

"We are happy to add a player of Isaac's stature to our lineup," Pats general manager Chad Lang said on Tuesday in a press release.

"Schacher will provide depth and add size to our back-end."

In 35 games with the Royals this season, the Kimberly, B.C. product has registered seven points and a plus-13 rating.

The move comes only days before the Jan. 10 WHL trade deadline. METRO

Skiing

Decision to sit out Sochi leaves Vonn 'devastated'

Lindsey Vonn will miss the Sochi Olympics because of a right knee injury, leaving the Winter Games without one of its biggest stars.

The 29-year-old skier from Vail, Colo., announced her decision Tuesday, exactly one month before the opening ceremony in Russia. Her personal publicist, Lewis Kay, said in a statement Vonn will have surgery "shortly."

In a Facebook posting, Vonn said she is "devastated" to miss the Olympics, "but the reality has sunk in that my knee is just too unstable to compete at this level." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Saskatchewan trio cracks Team Canada

Olympics. Kunitz, Getzlaf and Marleau selected to travel to Sochi

MARCO VIGLIOTTI
marco.vigliotti@metronews.ca

Three Saskatchewan-born NHL players have secured spots on the Canadian Olympic men's hockey roster, which was unveiled on Tuesday at a highly anticipated press conference in Toronto.

Regina natives Chris Kunitz and Ryan Getzlaf — brother of Saskatchewan Roughriders star receiver Chris Getzlaf — will join Aneroid, Sask., product Patrick Marleau on the men's national squad in Sochi, Russia as it guns for its second consecutive gold medal at the Olympic Winter Games.

"Thank you to all the congratulation tweets," Kunitz said on Twitter after the announcement.

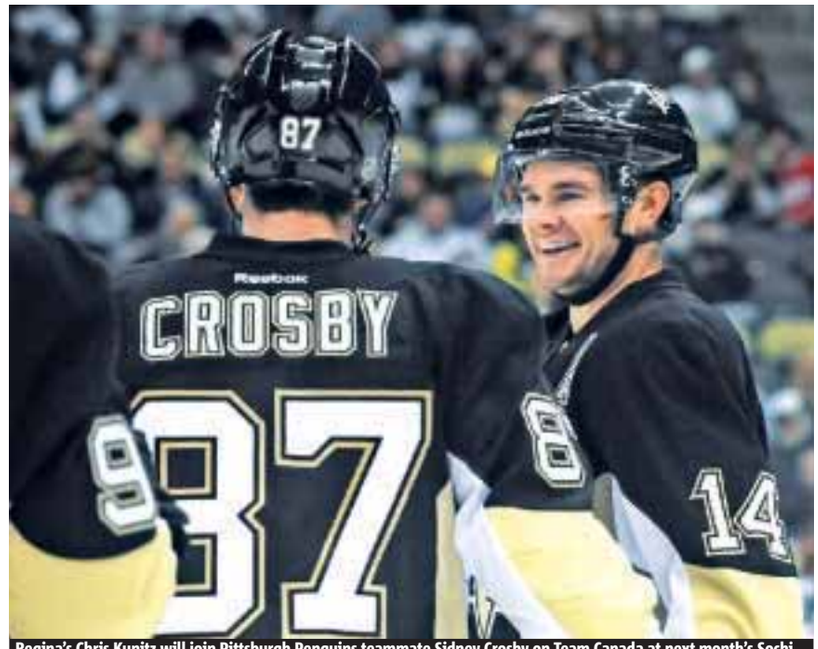
"Couldn't be more honored to represent my country."

Getzlaf and Marleau were on the 2010 Canadian team that won gold in Vancouver. This will be Kunitz's first Olympic appearance.

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall and Cam Broten, leader of the province's Official Opposition, took to Twitter to congratulate the homegrown stars on landing the highly-coveted roster spots.

All three Saskatchewan-born players are in the midst of solid campaigns with their respective NHL teams.

Kunitz, who plays for the star-stacked Pittsburgh Penguins and with fellow Olympic team member Sidney Crosby, was in sixth place in league scoring on Tuesday with 47 points in 44 games.



Regina's Chris Kunitz will join Pittsburgh Penguins teammate Sidney Crosby on Team Canada at next month's Sochi Olympics. Ryan Getzlaf, also from Regina, and Patrick Marleau, from Aneroid, Sask., will also play for Canada.
VINCENT PUGLIESE/ GETTY IMAGES

Canada's 25-man roster

Goalies. Roberto Luongo, Carey Price, Mike Smith.

Defencemen. Jay Bouwmeester, Drew Doughty, Dan Hamhuis, Duncan Keith, Alex Pietrangelo, P.K. Subban, Marc-Edouard Vlasic, Shea Weber.

Forwards. Jamie Benn, Patrice Bergeron, Jeff Carter, Sidney Crosby, Matt Duchene, Ryan Getzlaf, Chris Kunitz, Patrick Marleau, Rick Nash, Corey Perry, Patrick Sharp, Steven Stamkos, John Tavares, Jonathan Toews.

It's been an even better season for Getzlaf, who was fourth in NHL scoring going into Tuesday's action with 48 points — despite playing in only 41 games with the league-leading Anaheim Ducks.

The grizzled veteran Marleau, meanwhile, has picked up 41 points in 43 games with the San Jose Sharks.

Saskatoon's Mike Babcock is Team Canada's head coach.

Canada begins its quest for gold in Sochi on Feb. 13 against Norway.

Maple Leafs look lost against Islanders

Islanders forward Kyle Okposo celebrates his first-period goal on Tuesday night in Toronto. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Frans Nielsen, Calvin De Haan and Cal Clutterbuck all scored third-period goals to lead the New York Islanders past the Toronto Maple leafs 5-3 on Tuesday night.

New York (16-22-7) kicked off a six-game road trip with their second win in as many nights after downing the Dallas Stars 7-3 on Monday.

It was another frustrating decision for Toronto (21-18-5), which outshot the Islanders 26-25 coming off a lopsided 7-1 home loss to the New York Rangers on Saturday night. That defeat snapped a three-game win streak.

Olympic Leaf

"I'm so happy to make the Olympic team and to play at home, too."

Leafs forward Nikolai Kulemin, who was named to Russia's Olympic team on Tuesday. Americans Phil Kessel and James van Riemsdyk are also Leaf Olympians.

The Leafs made it interesting when Nazem Kadri's shot deflected in off Joffrey Lupul at the 16:55 mark of the third period to cut New York's lead to 4-3. It was Lupul's 13th goal of the season, delighting the Air Canada Centre gathering of 19,164. But Clutterbuck cemented the win with an empty-net goal at 19:51.

Nielsen's power-play goal, his 16th of the season, broke a 2-2 tie at 3:41 with Lupul serving a goalie interference penalty.

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Santa Fe takes on a snowstorm

Review. A 300-plus kilometre night-time trek in treacherous weather reveals the Hyundai model's winter prowess

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
drive@metronews.ca

PHOTO: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

2014 Hyundai Santa Fe

- **Type.** Four-door, front-wheel-drive compact wagon
- **Engines (hp).** 2-litre four cylinder, turbocharged and direct injected (264)
- **Transmissions.** 6-speed automatic
- **Base price (incl. destination).** $26,599

Tires

All wheel drive, ABS brakes and electronic stability control DO NOT make traction. The only way to increase the physical grip between a vehicle and a slippery road is with proper tires. Electronic aids or not, riding all-season tires in conditions like these would result in poor directional stability.

Xenon lights

My only complaint: xenon lights are typically great in a snowstorm. The ones in the Santa Fe were adequate, not mind-blowing. In clear conditions, they're more than adequate. For some reason, the light output diminishes notably when there's even a small amount of snow or ice on the lenses — and there's no washer system.

Mother Nature was all crabby-pants during my recent December test of the latest Hyundai Santa Fe, so she dumped about two feet of snow all over my hometown, then made the mercury plummet like Miley Cyrus's artistic standards.

Temperatures landed somewhere around 30 below, which is (delightfully) too cold for road salt to work. Prior to this, there was snow. Lots of snow. The second big, "all-night-long" dumping of the season. It left over a foot on the ground.

Naturally, I did what I always do when there's an all-night-long dumping of snow up here in Sudbury, Ont. I grabbed some buddies, some large double-doubles, and drove repeatedly around every unplowed back road I could find.

A few nights after this, I travelled 300 kilometres down Highway 69 after dark. That distance was spread evenly between extreme cold over frozen hard-packed ice-stripes and then slightly warmer temperatures accompanied by zero-visibility, blowing snow, and deep powder. A few noteworthy points about the wintertime driving experience of the tested 2013 Santa Fe 2.0T Limited AWD came to light in the process.

Proper ESC Calibration

In many winter situations, wheelspin is a good thing– and most of the time, the ESC in the Santa Fe allows enough of it. Wheelspin allows snow to be flung from the treads for better contact with the ground beneath the tires — so when you give Santa Fe the boots coming out of a parking lot and onto a busy street, it lets the wheels spin a little faster than they can grip to ensure you get moving quickly. In real life, this is more favorable than overly aggressive ESC systems that numb the throttle at any sign of wheelspin, cross their arms, report your activities to the fun police, and leave you throttleless in front of traffic. Ultimately, you'll feel like you're calling the shots, not the vehicle — and that's a good thing.

Hill Start Assist

Stop on a hill, and Santa Fe freezes the pressure in the brake lines for a few seconds while your foot moves from the brakes to the gas. This prevents rollback, makes life easier for the transmission, and also makes it far more likely that you'll get moving again after being stopped on an icy incline. After all, nothing's more embarrassing than holding up traffic while you spin all four tires and slide backwards like a sucker. The tester wore Hankook Winter I-Cept Evo tires in its 19-inch OEM size. I found them a nicely balanced all-round winter performance tire. They're perhaps slightly more slippery during hard braking and acceleration than a Michelin X-Ice or Pirelli Sottozero, but they are remarkably stable in a straight line and while steering.

AWD Done Right

Santa Fe's AWD system is clever and well set up for driving in nasty winter weather. The AWD system uses inputs from numerous sensors to pre-engage 4-wheel power in many situations when accelerating from a stop. Even with extremely light throttle in deep snow, it'll often power all four wheels from a stand still — preemptively increasing traction instead of letting the front wheels slip before engaging the rear ones. Otherwise, when the system brings the rear wheels online for propulsion, they engage quickly–within about 2 or 3 revolutions of the front wheels, and get a good share of engine power. This AWD system isn't shy about calling the rear wheels into play, and when all four tires spin, power is split actively to maximize extraction of available traction. There's even a 'lock' setting to pre-set the system into a 50/50 power split, though I never needed to use it. No issues with needless tire spinning or harshness during shifting power between the front and rear. In virtually any situation, this setup feels like it knows what it's doing.

Finally

After arriving at my destination, there was approximately 147 pounds of salty brown filthy road-guck frozen to the underside of the Santa Fe's front doors. Thankfully, those front doors actually cover the structural rocker panel where this frozen mess typically accumulates on most rides. Open the door, and the mess goes with it, revealing a clean-as-a-whistle surface to step over and keeping your pants clean.

Limited time 2.9% semi-monthly lease offered through Toyota Financial Services on approved credit to qualified retail customers on all new 2014 Corolla models. First semi-monthly payment due at lease inception and next semi-monthly payment due approximately 15 days later and semi-monthly thereafter throughout the term. Toyota Financial Services will waive the final semi-monthly payment. Semi-monthly lease offers not open to employees of Toyota Canada, Toyota Financial Services or TMMC/TMMC Vehicle Purchase Plan. Some conditions apply. See www.toyota.ca or your Toyota dealer for complete details. Example (applies across Canada except Quebec): 2014 Corolla CE 6M with a vehicle price of $17,515 (including $1,520 freight/PDI) leased at 2.9% over 60 months with $1,495 down payment equals 120 semi-monthly payments of $89 with a cost of borrowing of $1,672.60 and a total obligation of $12,327.40. $0 security deposit and first semi-monthly payment due at lease inception. Price and total obligation exclude license, insurance, registration, fees and taxes. 100,000 km allowance for 60 months, with ability to purchase additional kilometres at $0.05/km at time of lease inception, and a charge of $0.07/km for excess kilometres. Dealer may lease for less.

Automakers cosy up to electronics industry

Consumer Electronic Show. Car companies turn out in force to showcase such things as laser high-beam headlights and the solar panel roof

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Similar to a magnifying glass, the Ford C-MAX Solar Energi Concept's "concentrator" solar panel roof also has a patent-pending system that tracks the sun as it moves from east to west. COURTESY FORD

The low beam headlights on the Audi Sport Quattro are LED technology. The high beams are lasers. COURTESY AUDI

Billed as the world's largest technology trade show, the Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas is eagerly anticipated by the geeky gadget crowd, and pointedly ignored by folks at the other end of the spectrum, who think the world went to crap around 1980, when computers and microchips first arrived in force and started taking over our souls.

The automakers have become very interested of late in CES, and this year's show happening right now has a record nine automakers participating.

Their presence seems not so much as an opportunity to show off their new tech stuff — which they do all the time at auto shows — but more as a way to integrate themselves into the Silicon Valley culture and leverage the exciting technology coming forth from the consumer electronics industry.

Automakers increasingly need to be in that faster-moving milieu. Product cycles in the auto industry are five years or longer. The consumer electronic industry works a bit faster, yes?

And technology seems to be a more collaborative endeavour than it's ever been: witness the announcement at CES that Audi, GM, Google, Honda, Hyundai and NVIDA have joined together to form the Open Automotive Alliance (OAA) to bring the Android platform to cars.

"The worlds of consumer and automotive technologies have never been more closely aligned, and this alliance will only pave the way for faster innovation," said Ricky Hudi, head of electrics and electronics development at Audi AG.

Audi is displaying its Sport Quattro concept car at CES. The hybrid sports coupe is brimming with technology, but I'm focused on its laser high-beam headlights. Yes, lasers. Apparently, the high beams have a range of 500 metres — roughly twice the distance of regular high beams. Lasers are also very energy efficient. Their primary downsides are cost and an intolerance of heat. In the future those draw backs should be overcome, and experts predict they will peacefully coexist with LED lights, which still have a lot of love to give.

Hyundai announced its new Genesis sedan would be integrated with the amazing Google Glass. Drivers won't be able to use the futuristic glasses while driving, but integrated software will let drivers do all sorts of "pre-drive" functions with them, such as remote start, navigation and music settings.

Ford's major CES display is the Ford C-MAX Solar Energi Concept. Like all C-Max plug-in hybrids, this concept can be charged by its on-board charger running off the gasoline engine and by plugging it into the grid. The concept goes one step further, with a solar panel roof that provides the same electricity as a four-hour plug-in session, although it would need a full day's worth of daylight to make it happen.

Similar to a magnifying glass, the Concept's "concentrator" solar panel roof also has a patent-pending system that tracks the sun as it moves from east to west.

The concept is a collaborative project between Ford, Sun-Power Corp. and the Georgia Institute of Technology. The institute will begin to test the vehicle in real-world scenarios for its feasibility as a production car. Such a vehicle would be particularly awesome in places where the electrical grid sucks or just doesn't exist.

Experts trying to give vehicles their voice

Automotive communication. Researchers are figuring out the best way for your car to talk to you

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To note

- **Warnings aren't the only issue.** Researchers also look at incentives such as fuel economy gauges, to be sure they aren't too distracting.
- **With and without.** In addition to seeing how subjects react to feedback, researchers also look at how they drive when it's taken away afterwards, to see how effective it is.
- **Admissions.** Test subjects are more likely to admit they do something, such as texting while driving, if they think other people are okay with it, but are less likely to admit anti-social behaviours such as impaired driving.

What does your vehicle communicate to you and how do you respond to it? JIL MCINTOSH/METRO

Although it can't carry on a conversation, your car communicates with you. Depending on how it's equipped, this can be anything from a warning when your seat belt isn't fastened, to chimes and lights if there's a vehicle alongside when you're trying to change lanes.

But those warning signals aren't randomly selected: "It requires significant testing and development," says Birsen Donmez, an assistant professor of industrial engineering at the University of Toronto, who is working on a safety feedback program for Toyota. "Not everyone might react the same way to the same type of feedback, and the issue is to understand how to personalize these systems, because humans are so variable."

While Donmez isn't designing the actual systems, she's researching how drivers react to the feedback they're getting, and what types are most effective for the maximum number of drivers. The system must be effective enough to get the driver's attention, but can't be so distracting that it diverts all of the driver's focus, and he or she ends up hitting the object that initially triggered the warning.

Factors that go into feedback design include what sets off a warning, such as speeding or wandering out of the lane; when the warning goes off; if it's visual or makes a sound, or both; how long it's on, and what information it provides to the driver.

Researchers use a variety of methods for testing, including focus groups, questionnaires to assess the risks that drivers might take, and driving simulators. For some projects, the test subjects drive in real-world conditions.

In one analysis, Donmez worked with Transport Canada to monitor a group of drivers and their reaction to vehicle feedback when they were speeding or following too close to the vehicle in front. Not only did this provide information on the feedback, but it also let the researchers determine which drivers reacted most strongly to it, which could allow engineers to design systems that deliver the greatest assistance.

With so many individual drivers though, the system has to be geared toward providing benefit for a maximum number of people. "We go for the average, rather than each individual driver, unless it poses a danger for some drivers," Donmez says.

"At the worst case, you don't see a benefit (for every driver), but you don't see a decline in performance. You don't want to endanger anyone with the system."

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
This is one of those days when you would rather be anywhere than where you are supposed to be. If you can find a legit way out of the situation then go for it. But if you fail to turn up, you could create a powerful enemy.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Honest effort gets results, so keep plugging away at what you are working on and don't get dispirited if results are slow. Nothing you do is wasted and one day soon you will make that breakthrough you long for.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
It may appear as if someone is being deliberately obstructive, but you should ask yourself if there was something you said or did that could have turned them against you. If so, it's not too late to say sorry.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Why are you pessimistic about your prospects? You may not have gotten everything you wanted recently but there is always tomorrow. You'll feel positive closer to the weekend.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
No matter how unsettling the changes that are taking place may be, keep telling yourself that in the long-term they will work in your favour. Your life story is unfolding as it should.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Do something today that livens things up both at home and at work. Some may think you lost your senses but they are just the sort of people who have been dragging you down.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
This is an important time for you and you will be making major changes to your lifestyle. The full moon on the 16th will clear away obstacles. Between now and then, plan big.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
It seems you have made an error of judgment and all you can do is say sorry. If you sound sincere, others will forgive you and you can move on. But if your apology is grudging, bad feelings are likely to linger.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Most times your hunches are spot on but the planets warn your instincts are not to be trusted today, so take care. This is one of those occasions when you must stick to facts.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Your relationship with authority may not be as good as it should be today, so watch what you say and be ready to back off if a conversation gets heated. You'll be the loser if it gets ugly.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You may think someone is keeping something from you, but don't let it worry you. It's unlikely to be bad news and it's even possible they are planning some kind of surprise.

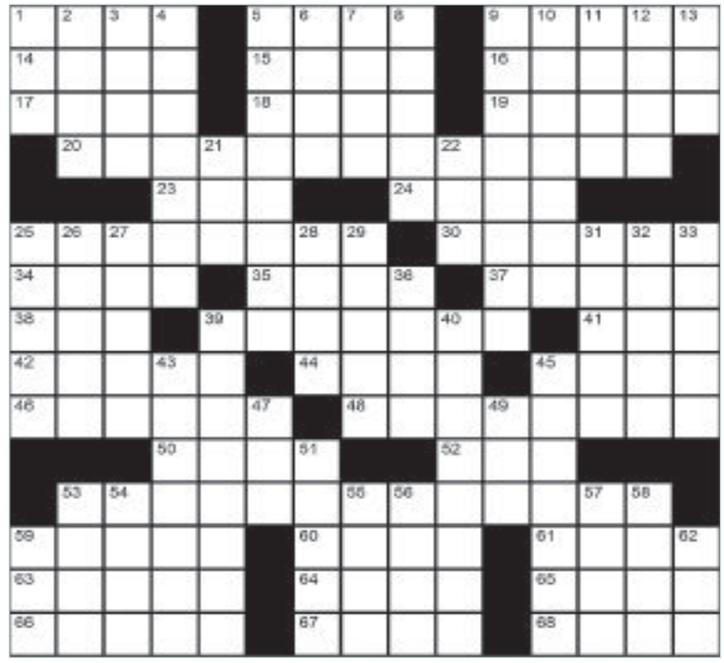
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You must let a certain person know that you have no intention of allowing them to get rich at your expense. Today's Mars-Jupiter link will bring tensions to a head — say what's on your mind.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

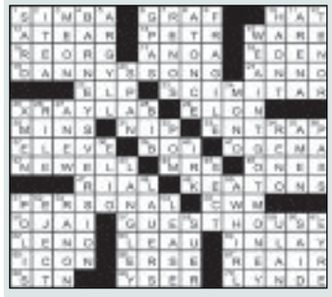
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Country legend Johnny
5. Interlock
9. __ Canada (Pest control company)
14. Vicinity
15. __ sax
16. Husky
17. Canadian actor Raymond
18. T.Rex's style
19. Some ducks
20. The ancient Ichthyosaur, for one: 2 wds.
23. Bear: Spanish
24. Rug sort
25. Ski resort transports
30. The __ Works ('80s band)
34. Lennon's in-laws
35. "...see __ __ believe..."
37. Comedy's Mr. Anderson
38. Orchestra __
39. Old Montreal horse-drawn carriage
41. TV show taper
42. Mo of CBS' "Sunday Morning"
44. "I could __ _ horse!"
45. Gladiator's 1502
46. Waiting to be connected: 2 wds.
48. Alberta community near the Saskatchewan border
50. Mister Ed's hair
52. Slangy put down
53. "Moonstruck" (1987) Canadian director: 2 wds.
59. Hawaiian island
60. Makeover show, "__ on a Dime"
61. Type of mineral
63. "It's _ __ from God!"
64. Ended
65. __ In Canada
66. Quebec 'cup'
67. Jewel's "You __ Meant for Me"
68. Bread spread

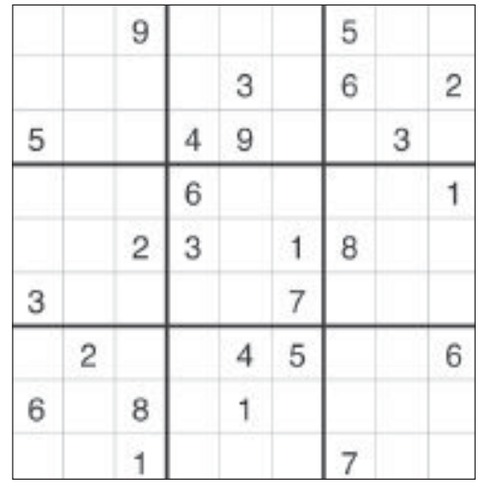
Down
1. Fare vehicle
2. Lily kind
3. Evening, in Italy
4. England: London department store
5. Julia in her 1989 'Steel' movie
6. Fashion magazine
7. Celestial body
8. Abodes
9. Barrier
10. Member of Canadian quartet The Tenors, Mr. Pereira
11. Ship part
12. "The Safety Dance" bit: "...can dance __ __ want to..."
13. Albany is its cap.
21. Prefix to 'thermal'
22. Fraternity letter
25. Give up amateur status: 2 wds.
26. Blooming __
(Starter menu item)
27. Top-__ (The best)
28. The Jetty __ __ Havre (Claude Monet painting)
29. Choo-choo-ing stuff
31. Blue Rodeo singer Jim
32. Bon Jovi's "__' on a Prayer"
33. "__, Indiana" (Early-'90s TV series)
36. Prefix to 'gon' (Eight-sided shape)
39. Medicine Cabinet: __ lotion
40. Canadian store HH = Home __
43. Canadian fashion label since 1983
45. "Cityline" 3 Chefs member, Mr. Capra
47. Scientific ID
49. Nintendo game console
51. Fund
53. Rocket org.
54. Nons opposites
55. Bee Gees' "__ Talkin'"
56. Rarely, hardly __
57. __ agreement
58. Connecting point
59. Nightspot in Broadway musical Cabaret, Kit __ Klub
62. New

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



Yesterday's Sudoku

2	5	8	6	1	3	7	4	9
9	1	6	4	8	7	3	2	5
7	3	4	9	2	5	1	6	8
8	6	5	2	3	8	4	7	1
4	9	3	5	7	1	6	8	2
1	2	7	8	6	4	9	5	3
5	4	1	7	9	8	2	3	6
6	7	9	3	5	2	8	1	4
3	8	2	1	4	6	5	9	7

Today
-17° / -19°
Variable

Thursday
-10° / -12°
Variable

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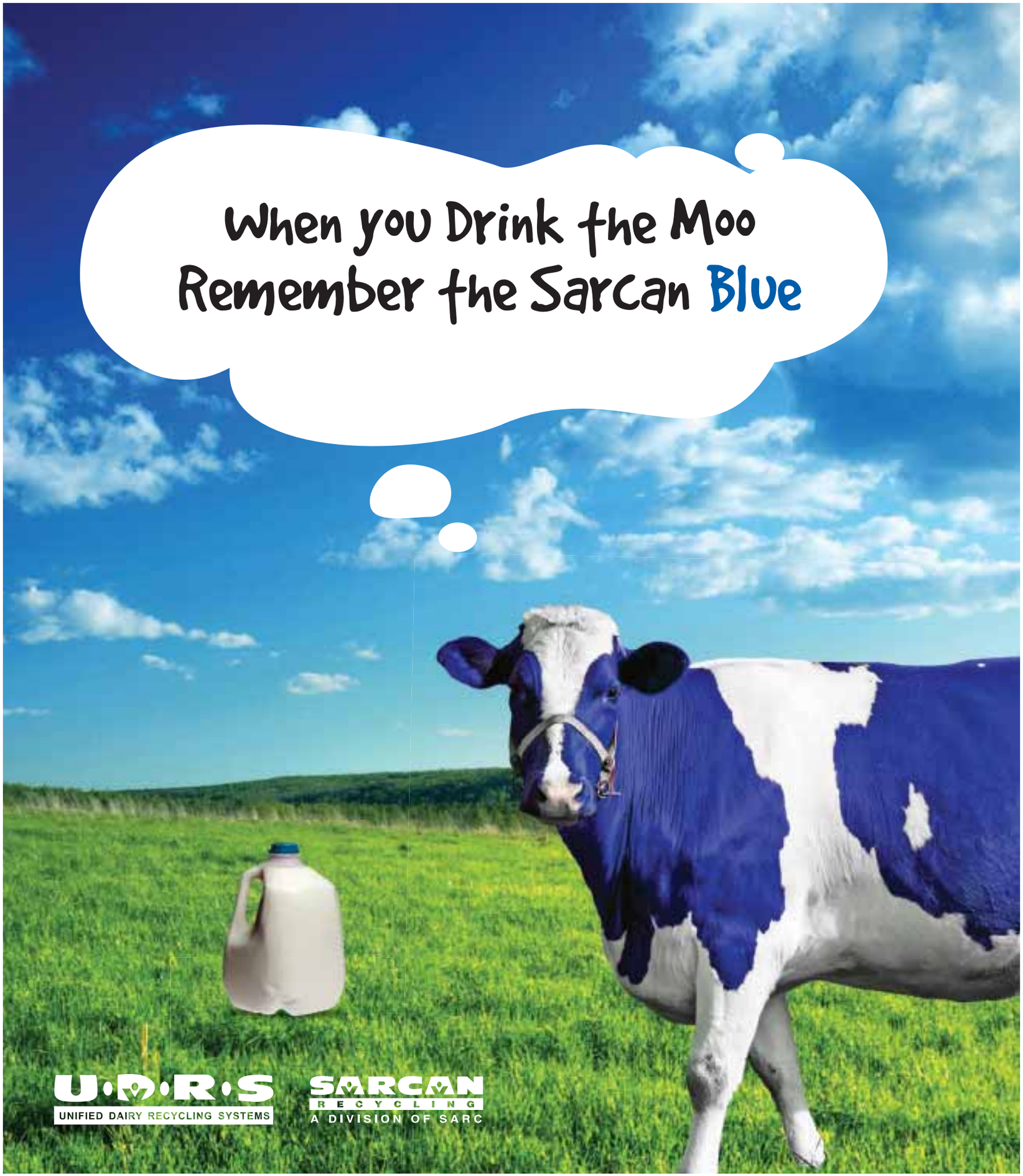
When you Drink the Moo
Remember the Sarcan Blue
U·M·R·S
UNIFIED DAIRY RECYCLING SYSTEMS
SARCAN
RECYCLING
A DIVISION OF SARC